

**OVERVIEW**

Made in the USA, Intense's M9 FRO is a race-bred downhill chassis that's happiest when the tempo is high and the terrain is rugged. Although, it's a race bike at heart, it comes with great tuning features that will help it adapt to just about any speed-loving gravity junkie that wants to tap into the potential of the refined suspension and handling. 📌

**PRICE:** \$2,999 (w/ Cane Creek Double Barrel and Angleset Headset), \$2,950 (w/ FOX DHX RC4 and Cane Creek Angleset Headset); **WEIGHT:** 40.81 lbs.; **SIZES:** S, M (tested), L; **COLORS:** Lots; **CONTACT:** [intensecycles.com](http://intensecycles.com)

**SPECIFICATIONS****CHASSIS**

FRAME: Aluminum  
 FORK: Fox 40 FIT RC2; 203mm  
 SHOCK: Cane Creek Double Barrel; 216, 229 or 241mm

**COCKPIT**

BRAKES: Formula The One; 203/160mm  
 HANDLEBAR: Truvativ Holzfeller  
 HEADSET: Cane Creek Angleset  
 SADDLE: Intense  
 SEATPOST: Titec Hell Beat  
 SHIFTER: Shimano XTR  
 STEM: Truvativ Holzfeller Direct Mount

**WHEELS**

HUBS F/R: Azonic Outlaw  
 RIMS: Azonic Outlaw  
 TIRES F/R: Kenda Excavator/Kenda Nevegil; 2.5/2.35"

**DRIVETRAIN**

BOTTOM BRACKET: Shimano Saint  
 CASSETTE: Shimano XT; 9-Speed; 11-28T  
 CHAINGUIDE: MRP G2 SL  
 CRANKS: Shimano Saint  
 DERAILLEUR: Shimano Saint  
 PEDALS: Polaris One Pedium



# INTENSE M9 FRO

**SINCE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE M1** IN 1994, INTENSE'S FLAGSHIP DOWNHILL CHASSIS HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO COMPLEMENT THE ABILITIES OF TOP-LEVEL RIDERS AND RACERS. WHEN INTENSE ADAPTED THE VPP SUSPENSION DESIGN WITH THE M3 IN 2003, A NEW ERA BEGAN FOR INTENSE'S DOWNHILL FRAMES BUT THE PRINCIPLES REMAIN THE SAME: CONTINUED REFINEMENT USING INPUT FROM THEIR RIDERS LIKE CHRIS KOVARIK, MATTI LEHIKONEN, MATT SIMMONDS, RUARIDH CUNNINGHAM, CLAIRE BUCAR AND WORLD CHAMPION EMMELINE RAGOT. TAKING TWO YEARS TO DEVELOP AND BUILDING OFF 16 YEARS OF DOWNHILL EXPERIENCE, THE M9 FRO IS NOW READY FOR CONSUMPTION.

## THE TECHNOLOGY

Although the M9 is essentially the advancement of the M6, it uses a completely new chassis and suspension system. The tubing specifications and frame architecture have been redesigned as well as the upper and lower linkages. The frame uses a 1-1/2-inch head tube, 83mm bottom bracket shell and replaceable dropouts with a 12x150mm rear thru-axle. A one-piece monocoque design makes up the top tube and seat tower while the down tube has a hydroformed triangular shape that expands at the bottom bracket to increase strength and stiffness. There are gussets at the top and

bottom of the head tube and a large crescent-shaped brace connects the seat tower, down tube and bottom bracket shell. The swingarm is constructed with formed oversized tubing. **VPP** The M9 uses a Virtual Pivot Point (VPP) suspension system that features two short links that rotate in opposite directions. Sealed bearings handle the movement and the lower link has grease fittings to ease maintenance. **Geometry Adjustments** The M9 comes with Cane Creek's Angleset headset to offer head angle adjustments and adjustable dropouts to regulate the chainstay and wheelbase lengths. The top of the head tube features a pinch bolt

design to capture the upper headset cup, which allows for easier removal and installation of the upper cup. The Angleset headset offers three upper cups to change the head angle by 0, +/-0.5 and +/-1.0 degrees relative to the stock 64-degree head angle. Intense includes all three cups with the frame. The G3 dropouts offer three positions - 17.25, 17.5 and 17.75 inches - to adjust the chainstay length.

**Suspension Adjustments** The M9 has two ways to regulate the behavior of the rear suspension that go beyond the shock damping adjustments. First, there are three mounting positions for the front of the shock to control the progression of the shock rate. The middle is the standard setting, but riders can increase the progression of the shock rate by using the lower mounting hole or lessen the rate with the upper hole. The second way to tune the rear suspension is with the travel adjustment. The M9 has the option to get 216, 229 or 241mm (8.5, 9 or 9.5") of travel. The travel settings are changed via a Travel Adjustment Module, which moves the position of the rear shock mount in the linkage. There are two Modules, one for the 229mm setting and another that can be flip-flopped to offer 216 or 241mm of travel.

**M9 Kits** Currently, the M9 is only available as a frameset but Intense is looking into the possibility of offering a complete bike so check with them for updates. The M9 is available with Fox's DHX RC4 shock for \$2950 or for \$2,999 it comes with Cane Creek's Double Barrel, which is how we tested it. Both frame options come with Cane Creek's Angleset headset, which includes all three head angle adjustment cups.

## THE RIDE

The simplest way to describe the M9 FRO is label it a full-blown downhill race bike. The handling and suspension cater to riding aggressive terrain with intent and the majority of Intense's input comes from their racers. However, between the suspension and geometry adjustments, the M9 can be tuned to match up with just about any rider that likes gravity-fed trails.

**Handling** The standard geometry setup of the M9 - stock 64-degree head angle and 17.5-inch chainstay (middle dropout setting) - provides great handling for navigating most legit downhill trails. The bike needs a proper downhill slope to be in its element and with a little speed it really comes alive. It has great stability that provides confidence on rugged terrain and when laying it over into corners. When settled into the sag zone, the M9 has a long wheelbase that adds to the stability, but the bike still handles tight switchbacks and direction changes well with some initiative and a little rear-wheel steering. We did most of our riding with the stock head angle and middle dropout setting as it provides great handling for a variety of conditions, but these adjustment options allow for riders to tweak the bike more towards their riding style and course conditions, if desired.

**Suspension Tuning** The three shock rate options and three travel settings add a lot of dimension to the M9 because they are easy to understand and perceive on the trail. These choices not only allow the rider to tune the amount and character of the travel, they can also dictate the handling of the bike. Tuning how the VPP rear suspension reacts to impacts and where it spends most of its time within the travel stroke will also affect the head angle and bottom bracket height. The Double Barrel shock on our test bike also has excellent damping adjustments that complement the rear travel, offering a lot of control over the feel of the suspension. Not surprising, we liked the middle travel setting (229mm) with the shock set in the middle frame hole for most downhill riding. Going to 241mm of travel gives the bike more bump compliance and on the flipside, the 216mm setup lowers the average shock rate, making the suspension more responsive to the terrain.

**Descending** The "For Racing Only" (FRO) moniker on the M9 should be thought of as a mindset more than a rule. If you like going downhill fast and think it's a bonus to run over lots of rocks and roots on the way down then you'll like the M9. It's happiest on trails with an adequate downhill pitch and once you get up to speed, the handling and suspension start to reveal their true calling. This bike thrives on fast trails but isn't shy navigating technical terrain full of step-downs, chutes and gaps. The suspension gobbles up everything in its path and really works well with the geometry to provide a balanced feel that responds well to rider input, whether you're diving into an off-camber corner, sending off a kicker or ralling through a rock pile.

